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REVIEW

Gerry Mooney and Gill Scott, *Social Justice and Social Policy in Scotland*. Bristol: The Policy Press, 2012. Pp. 296. ISBN 978-1-84742-703-8. £70.00.

This edited collection of papers aims to explore the impact of more than a decade of devolution on social justice and social policy in Scotland. It achieves these aims by addressing a series of questions set out in the introduction: how far has social policy in a devolved Scotland worked to promote social justice? Is Scotland now a fairer and more just country? To what extent are Scotland's inequality, material inequality, and extensive social problems being tackled? Are there other ways of doing social justice and social policy? These and other questions are considered under the current policy conditions in Scotland: the maturing institutions of a devolved government; the election of a Conservative Liberal-Democrat Coalition government; the economic crisis post-2008; and the victory of the Scottish National Party (SNP) in the 2011 Scottish Parliamentary elections (p. 3).

The book is divided into fifteen chapters. The introduction sets out the Scottish context of social justice and social policy in a country with more devolved powers than most other devolved jurisdictions. The authors are bold and considered in their treatment of controversial subjects in the next thirteen chapters, which each explore an aspect of social policy in relation to: progress made post-devolution; the powers, devolved and reserved, pertaining to each topic; possible alternative policy responses and their potential impact; as well as an insight into future possibilities and considerations. Space prohibits a review of each chapter, but topics include: the territorial politics of the devolved state and the area it inhabits between autonomy and dependence (chapter 2); income inequality in Scotland in both absolute and relative terms which remains higher than in the rest of the UK (chapter 3), while poverty (chapter 4) steadily decreased in the decade following devolution. Race and migration (chapter 6) gives a thorough analysis of how Scottish, UK, and international contexts shape these issues for

Scotland. It is unfortunate that the results of the 2011 census in Scotland were not released in time for this chapter, as the addition of up to date data would have provided fascinating analysis of identity, race, migration, and their policy implications. Chapter 9, on health, notes that the focus on health services and their restructuring post-devolution has not placed sufficient focus on tackling the growing divide in health outcomes between rich and poor, a fact also noted in recent analysis of poverty and inequality in Scotland (Aldridge et al, 2013). In chapter 11, we learn of policy divergence between Scotland and the rest of the UK, and, surprisingly, of policy convergence in the immediate post-devolution years in relation to youth criminal justice, before divergence again under the SNP government. This is unusual given that a pre-devolved Scotland always had control over its law and criminal justice. These thirteen areas of enquiry into social justice segue into chapter 15's analyses of the future of social policy and social justice amidst changing inequalities. Lastly, it notes evidence that people in Scotland are seeking a strengthening of powers to the devolved parliament to allow for bespoke solutions to Scottish social problems (p. 257).

This book provides rigorous analysis of progress made so far towards the stated aims of social justice and social policy in Scotland, as well as gives an honest critique of success and failure to address these. Where this book especially succeeds is its appraisal of: the levels of policy control and flexibility successive Scottish governments have had over key areas of social justice and social policy; what policy initiatives were within the boundaries of their remit, what policy initiatives were implemented and their outcomes; what policy initiatives could have been implemented; what impact implementation of such policies might have had. We learn that the first two Labour-led administrations may not have had the flexibility to diverge in policy terms from the then ruling Labour government in Westminster (p. 66). The third administration, an SNP minority government had its hands tied somewhat due to not having a majority in parliament (p. 69). A consequence of not having a majority in the third administration, however, led the SNP minority government to engage in more consultation and partnership-working than its predecessors in the development and implementation of policies (p. 70). However, this

fourth and most recent administration (2011-present), an SNP majority government, now has more power than before to take the stated goals of social justice in Scotland beyond political rhetoric (p. 3). There are inherent difficulties in achieving some of these aims in light of the economic crisis, reduced financial settlement of the UK government and consequent contraction in public spending, but where this book's strength lies is in its analysis of what can be done and to what effect. This book provides practical policy suggestions as well as scholarly review.

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